



# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

## Practices of Leading Private-Sector Companies

Highlights of [GAO-03-390](#), a report to the Chairman, Tom Davis, Committee on Government Reform and Representative Jim Turner, House of Representatives

### Why GAO Did This Study

The rapid pace of technological change, with its potential to transform the way the government delivers services, makes information technology (IT) human capital a critical issue for federal agencies.

GAO has identified strategic human capital management as a high risk area for the federal government, and the demand for skilled IT workers is expected to increase over the long term. Given that competition for workers affects the federal government as it does any other employer, effective training of staff is essential to developing and retaining a qualified workforce.

Some private-sector companies are recognized for their effective and innovative training programs for the IT workforce, which could provide models and examples for federal agencies. To help federal agencies better design and implement such training programs, GAO was asked to examine private-sector practices for training both IT and non-IT professionals (e.g., business managers and other staff needing training in IT) that could be used as a basis for addressing federal efforts.

### What GAO Found

GAO identified 22 existing and emerging training practices used by leading companies to implement effective IT training. We organized these practices and accompanying case studies under five training management processes that we defined based on input from industry experts, published research, and previous GAO work (see table below). Although none of the companies was performing all the practices, the majority performed 10 or more.

Organizations and experts agree that these practices could result in more effective training management, but in applying the identified practices, we noted several critical issues (e.g., funding constraints and demonstrating return on investment) that should be considered. The practices may also suggest approaches to IT training for government agencies to consider.

GAO's discussions with leading private sector companies indicate that training is not simply a support function, but a strategic element in achieving corporate objectives. Further, although companies are adopting new ideas about training, many initiatives are in their early stages, and private sector officials expressed interest in learning about innovative practices emerging from the public sector.

**IT Training Management Processes and Sample Practices (see app. I for full list)**

Management processes	Sample practices
Align IT training with business goals	Enlist executive-level champions
	Involve critical stakeholders
Identify and assess IT training needs	Document competencies/skills required for each job description
	Perform a gap analysis to determine needed training
Allocate IT training resources	Use an investment process to select and manage training projects
	Provide resources for management training, e.g., leadership and project management
Design and deliver IT training	Give trainees choices among different training delivery methods
	Build courses using reusable components
Evaluate/demonstrate the value of IT training	Collect information on how job performance is affected by training
	Assess evaluation results in terms of business impact

Source: GAO.

Note: Analysis of company-provided information.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-390](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-390).

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Joel Willemsen at (202) 512-6253 or [willemsenj@gao.gov](mailto:willemsenj@gao.gov).